

Message Text

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PAGE 01 RANGOO 01798 060708Z

12

ACTION EA-14

INFO OCT-01 ADP-00 CIAE-00 DODE-00 INR-10 NSAE-00 PA-03

RSC-01 USIA-15 PRS-01 EB-11 OC-06 CCO-00 RSR-01 /063 W

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R 060609Z AUG 73

FM AMEMBASSY RANGOON

TO SECSTATE WASHDC 7060

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E.O. 11652: N/A DECONTROL DEC 31, 1977

TAGS: ENRG, PINS, BM

SUBJECT: RANGOON ELECTRICITY SUPPLY CURTAILED BY INSURGENT ACTIONS

1. SINCE JULY 24 RANGOON HAS SUFFERED VARYING DEGREES OF ELECTRIC POWER SHORTAGES RESULTING FROM INSURGENT ACTIONS IN KAYAH STATE. SEVERAL POWER PYLONS BETWEEN TOUNGOO AND THANDAUNG WERE BLOWN UP ON THAT DATE. SUBSEQUENTLY OTHER PYLONS WERE DESTROYED OR DAMAGED IN LOIKAW AREA. BLOWING UP OF BRIDGES BY INSURGENTS AT STRATEGIC POINTS HAS DELAYED REPAIR WORK.

2. LATEST INCIDENT OCCURRED ON NIGHT OF AUGUST 2 WHEN TWO MORE PYLONS WERE BLOWN UP IN LOIKAW AREA. ELECTRIC POWER CORPORATION ENGINEER CONFIDED TO EMBASSY THAT REPAIR WORK IS DIFFICULT BECAUSE WORKERS ARE BEING SNIPED AT BY INSURGENTS. HE SAID THAT PROBLEM FURTHER COMPLICATED BECAUSE INSURGENTS EQUIPPED WITH MINE DETECTORS ARE REMOVING MINES PLACED BY BURMA ARMY FORCES AROUND PYLONS FOR PROTECTION, AND ARE RELOCATING THEM AT SITES WHERE GUB FORCES THEMSELVES UNWITTINGLY SET THEM OFF. THIS VERSION SUPPORTED BY REPORT FROM EMBASSY SOURCE THAT ELECTRIC POWER WORKER FROM THAT AREA WAS BROUGHT TO RANGOON GENERAL HOSPITAL WITH LEG BLOWN OFF BY MINE. EPC OFFICIAL ADDED THAT, INCLUDING TWO PYLONS BLOWN UP MIGHT OF AUGUST 2 TOTAL OF EIGHT ARE NOW OUT OF OPERATION. WITH POWER FROM LAWPITA CUT OFF, EPC IS FORCED TO SHED LOAD IN RANGOON TO LIMIT CONSUMPTION TO CAPACITY OF LOCAL STEAM AND DIESEL PLANTS. LAWPITA HYDROELECTRIC PLANT IS PRESENTLY UNDERGOING MODIFICATIONS TO DOUBLE OUTPUT CAPACITY BY DECEMBER 1, 1973; HOWEVER,

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PAGE 02 RANGOO 01798 060708Z

PROBLEM OF ENSURING POWER DELIVERY TO THE USERS REMAINS.

3. EFFECT ON EMBASSY PERSONNEL THUS FAR HAS BEEN MORE ANNOYING THAN SERIOUS, WITH SOME INDIVIDUAL HOUSES GOING WITHOUT POWER FOR 24 HOUR PERIODS. CHANCERY BUILDING SUFFERS POWER CUTS DURING DAY WHICH AFFECT LIGHTING, ELECTRIC TYPEWRITERS, AIR-CONDITIONERS, AND ELEVATORS. EMERGENCY GENERATOR IS EMPLOYED DURING THESE PERIODS BUT IT DOES NOT HAVE SUFFICIENT CAPABILITY TO SUPPLY POWER FOR ENTIRE CHANCERY.

4. SITUATION IN RANGOON AND PROBABLY ELSEWHERE DIFFERS FROM PREVIOUS POWER CUTS IN THAT (A) PRESENT ONES HAVE EXISTED FOR LONGER PERIOD; (B) OUTLOOK, BECAUSE OF REASONS CITED ABOVE, IS THAT THEY WILL CONTINUE AT LEAST FOR SOME TIME. PUBLIC AT LARGE IS TAKING SITUATION IN STRIDE, BEING BY NOW ACCUSTOMED TO SUCH INSURGENT-CREATED CUTS. NEVERTHELESS, THEY DO NOT ENHANCE THE AUTHORITY OF CENTRAL GOVERNMENT. THEY ALSO CAUSE SERIOUS ECONOMIC LOSSES, WITH MAJOR POWER-CONSUMING INDUSTRIES IDLE OR ON PART-TIME. COLUMNIST KO KO IN WORKING PEOPLE'S DAILY AUGUST 5 STATED THAT "MUCH OF THE COUNTRY HAS BEEN PLUNGED INTO DARKNESS, THEREBY CAUSING A GREAT DEAL OF INCONVENIENCE, AND DISLOCATION OF BUSINESS ESPECIALLY TOWORKING PEOPLE WHO CAN ILL AFFORD SUCH DISRUPTION."

5. WHILE POWER SUPPLY OVER WEEKEND HAS IMPROVED, OUTLOOK REMAINS UNCERTAIN.
MARTIN

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Message Attributes

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